
Manner: NATURAL

A death that is classified as natural comes under the jurisdiction of the Medical Examiner because of the sudden and unexpected nature of the death, because there is no physician who has knowledge or awareness of the decedent's condition, or when circumstances surrounding death arouse suspicion. In these situations, the Medical Examiner becomes responsible for certification of death. It should be stressed that the natural deaths investigated by the Medical Examiner are not representative of all natural deaths in the general population, because these jurisdictional considerations introduce a significant sampling bias.

In 2001, there were 619 deaths attributed to natural causes that came under the jurisdiction of the King County Medical Examiner, representing 39% (619/1,578) of the cases investigated. Seventy-seven percent (479/619) of these deaths were certified by the King County Medical Examiner, and 23% (140/619) were certified by attending physicians who had knowledge of the decedent's medical condition. Autopsies were performed in 72% (343/479) of the deaths certified as natural by the King County Medical Examiner, which includes autopsies performed in all 18 deaths from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Deaths categorized as "congestive heart failure" were certified by physicians outside of the King County Medical Examiners Office who did not list the underlying disease process.

The data presented in this section are derived from the 619 natural deaths under the King County Medical Examiner's jurisdiction. Cardiovascular disease accounted for the greatest proportion of natural deaths. Most deaths in which an autopsy was not performed were certified as due to "probable arteriosclerotic cardiovascular disease".

Table 1-5 Disease Processes Causing Natural Deaths in 2001

NUMBER OF DEATHS	DISEASE DESCRIPTION
CARDIOVASCULAR	
9	Aortic aneurysm/dissection
141	Arteriosclerotic cardiovascular disease
2	Bacterial endocarditis
4	Cardiac dysrhythmia
12	Cardiomyopathy
3	Congenital heart disease
4	Congestive heart failure
2	Coronary artery anomaly
42	Hypertensive ASCVD / hypertensive heart disease
10	Other
121	Probable arteriosclerotic cardiovascular disease
2	Valvular heart disease
352	TOTAL CARDIOVASCULAR
CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM	
12	Epilepsy (idiopathic & other non-traumatic etiologies)
10	Other
15	Spontaneous intracerebral hemorrhage
12	Spontaneous rupture of aneurysm
49	TOTAL CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM
ENDOCRINE	
8	Diabetic ketoacidosis
2	Diabetes mellitus, not otherwise specified
2	Other
4	Pancreatitis
16	TOTAL ENDOCRINE
Gastrointestinal	
1	Appendicitis
1	Bacterial peritonitis
1	Gastrointestinal hemorrhage
1	Obstruction
5	Peptic ulcer disease
3	Other
12	TOTAL GASTROINTESTINAL

Table 1-5 (Cont.) Disease Processes Causing Natural Deaths in 2001

NUMBER OF DEATHS	DISEASE DESCRIPTION
	HEPATIC
8	Cirrhosis
1	Fatty liver
1	Hepatic failure
6	Other
16	TOTAL HEPATIC
	MALIGNANCY
4	Breast
3	Gastrointestinal
12	Lung
5	Prostate
12	Other
36	TOTAL MALIGNANCY
	OTHER PROCESSES
22	Chronic ethanolism
3	HIV / AIDS
14	Infection
6	Labor/Delivery/Prematurity
6	Sepsis
11	Other
62	TOTAL OTHER PROCESSES
	RESPIRATORY
4	Asthma
15	Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
22	Pneumonia
12	Pulmonary thromboembolus
18	Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
5	Other
76	TOTAL RESPIRATORY
267	TOTAL Non-cardiovascular Cause of Death
352	TOTAL Cardiovascular Cause of Death
619	Total NATURAL DEATHS under KCMEO Jurisdiction, 2001

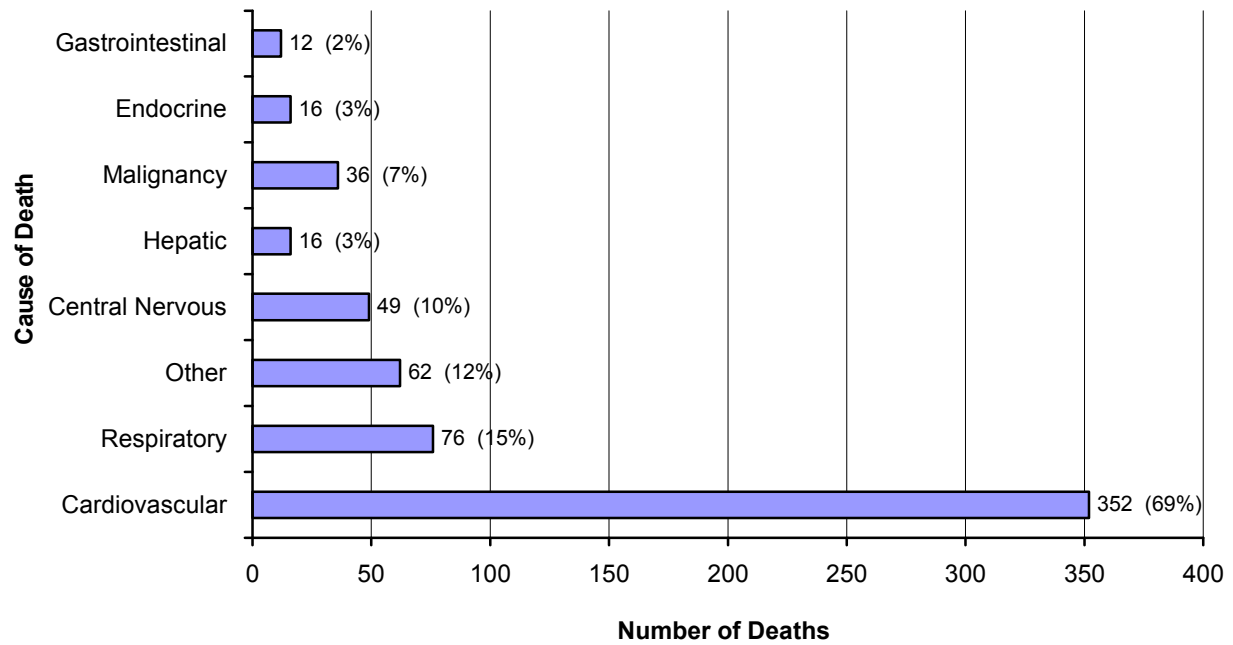
Graph 5-1 Deaths Due to Natural Causes in 2001

Table 5-2 Deaths Due to Natural Causes and Race of the Decedent

DISEASE PROCESS/ GENDER	RACE					SUB TOTAL	TOTAL
	WHITE	BLACK	ASIAN	NATIVE AMERICAN	OTHER		
Cardiovascular	301	25	19	5	2		352
<i>Male</i>	210	20	14	5	1	250	
<i>Female</i>	91	5	5	0	1	102	
Respiratory	58	10	3	3	2		76
<i>Male</i>	36	5	0	1	2	44	
<i>Female</i>	22	5	3	2	0	32	
Other	44	5	2	5	5		61
<i>Male</i>	31	5	2	3	4	45	
<i>Female</i>	13	0	0	2	1	16	
Central Nervous	37	4	4	3	1		49
<i>Male</i>	20	2	3	1	0	26	
<i>Female</i>	17	2	1	2	1	23	
Hepatic	16	0	0	0	0		16
<i>Male</i>	11	0	0	0	0	11	
<i>Female</i>	5	0	0	0	0	5	
Malignancy	31	3	1	1	0		36
<i>Male</i>	20	2	1	1	0	24	
<i>Female</i>	11	1	0	0	0	12	
Undetermined	1	0	0	0	0		1
<i>Male</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<i>Female</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	
Endocrine	14	2	0	0	0		16
<i>Male</i>	13	1	0	0	0	14	
<i>Female</i>	1	1	0	0	0	2	
Gastrointestinal	11	1	0	0	0		12
<i>Male</i>	5	0	0	0	0	5	
<i>Female</i>	6	1	0	0	0	7	
Total	513	50	29	17	10		619
Percent	83%	8%	5%	3%	2%		

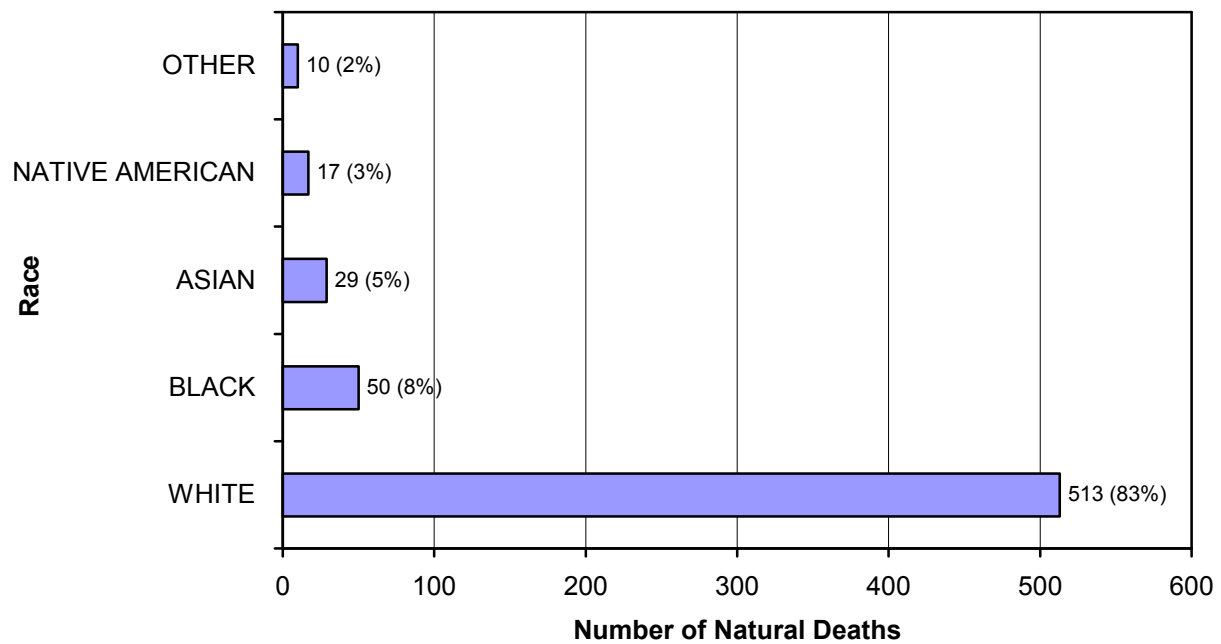
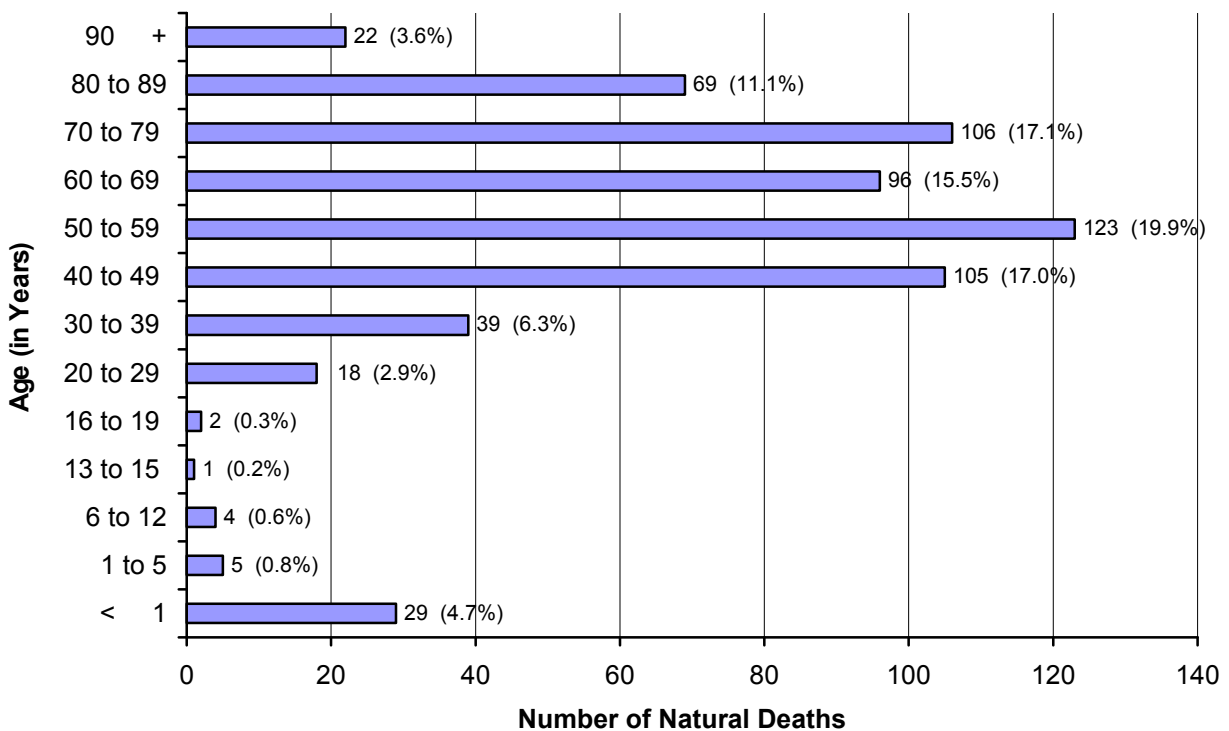
Graph 5-2 Deaths Due to Natural Causes and Race of the Decedent**Graph 5-3 Deaths Due to Natural Causes and Age Group of the Decedent**

Table 5-3 Deaths Due to Natural Causes and Age Group of the Decedent

METHOD/ GENDER	AGE GROUP (YEARS)														SUB TOTAL	TOTAL
	< 1	1 to 5	6 to 12	13 to 15	16 to 19	20 to 29	30 to 39	40 to 49	50 to 59	60 to 69	70 to 79	80 to 89	90 +			
Cardiovascular	3	1	1	1	1	4	16	52	65	64	83	46	15	352		
Male	1	0	0	0	1	3	14	40	58	51	54	23	5	250		
Female	2	1	1	1	0	1	2	12	7	13	29	23	10	102		
Respiratory	18	0	0	0	1	2	3	14	12	11	8	4	3	76		
Male	10	0	0	0	0	1	2	8	6	9	6	2	0	44		
Female	8	0	0	0	1	1	1	6	6	2	2	2	3	32		
Other	6	2	0	0	0	4	8	15	17	4	2	2	1	61		
Male	4	2	0	0	0	2	6	13	11	2	2	2	1	45		
Female	2	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	6	2	0	0	0	16		
Central Nervous	2	2	2	0	0	4	5	8	10	4	2	9	1	49		
Male	1	0	2	0	0	3	5	4	4	4	1	2	0	26		
Female	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	4	6	0	1	7	1	23		
Hepatic	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	8	5	0	0	0	0	16		
Male	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	4	0	0	0	0	11		
Female	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	5		
Malignancy	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	6	11	8	5	1	36		
Male	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	4	6	6	4	0	24		
Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	5	2	1	1	12		
Undetermined	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1		
Male	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Female	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1		
Endocrine	0	0	1	0	0	1	3	3	4	1	1	1	1	16		
Male	0	0	1	0	0	1	3	3	3	1	1	0	1	14		
Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2		
Gastrointestinal	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	4	1	2	2	0	12		
Male	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	5		
Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	2	2	0	7		
Total	29	5	4	1	2	18	39	105	123	96	106	69	22	619		
Percent	5%	1%	1%	0%	0%	3%	6%	17%	20%	16%	17%	11%	4%			

Table 5-4 Deaths Due to Natural Causes and Gender of the Decedent

CIRCUMSTANCES	GENDER		TOTAL
	MALE	FEMALE	
Cardiovascular	250	102	352
Respiratory	44	32	76
Other	45	16	61
Central Nervous	26	23	49
Hepatic	11	5	16
Malignancy	24	12	36
Undetermined	0	1	1
Endocrine	14	2	16
Gastrointestinal	5	7	12
Total	419	200	619
Percent	68%	32%	